

**United States Department of the Interior
Bureau of Land Management**

**Finding of No Significant Impact
Environmental Assessment
DOI-BLM-UT-Y010-2015-0158-EA**

*m/037/0088
incoming*

October, 2015

**Centennial Pit Backfilling Mine Plan Modification
for the
Lisbon Valley Copper Mine, San Juan County, Utah**

Location: Sections 25, 36, T. 30 S, R. 25 E

Applicant/Address: Lisbon Valley Mining Company, LLC
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RECEIVED E-Mail
OCT 19 2015
Div. of Oil, Gas & Mining

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FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT
Environmental Assessment
DOI-BLM-UT-Y010-2014-0018
Centennial Pit Backfilling Mine Plan Modification for the
Lisbon Valley Copper Mine, San Juan County, Utah

Introduction

The Bureau of Land Management (BLM), Moab Field Office has conducted an environmental analysis to assess the potential impacts associated with Lisbon Valley Mining Company's proposed mine plan modifications. The environmental analysis is documented in the attached Environmental Assessment (EA No. DOI-BLM-UT-Y010-2014-0018-EA). The proposed project is located at the Lisbon Valley Copper Mine, located about 15 miles south of La Sal, Utah in San Juan, County. The proposal is to modify the Lisbon Valley Copper Mine's Mining Plan of Operations. Pursuant to Federal Regulations at 43 CFR Subpart 3809 which apply to operations authorized by the mining laws on public lands, Lisbon Valley Mining Company submitted the modifications to the Mine Plan in March 2015. The mine plan modifications constitute the Proposed Action in the EA.

Under the Proposed Action, Lisbon Valley Mining proposed to backfill Centennial Pit with mine beds 14 and 15 waste instead of wasting in dumps on the surface (which was approved under the current Mine Plan). Mine waste determined to be acid generating would continue to be encapsulated in acid neutralizing material on the surface. The rest of the Mining Plan of Operations would continue to be in effect.

There would be no new surface disturbance. The current Centennial Pit is approximately 176 acres and the mining operation is about 1,104 acres in size. For a detailed description of the Proposed Action the reader should refer to the attached EA. The Proposed Action would meet the underlying need for Lisbon Valley Mining to continue to mine a valuable deposit of copper from unpatented mining claims under the authority of the mining laws of the United States, while ensuring that operations are conducted in a manner that prevents unnecessary or undue degradation of public lands and conforms to the management prescriptions in the BLM land use plan.

The BLM considered three alternatives, as documented in the EA: the Proposed Action analyzed as alternative A, which is partially backfilling to 10 feet above the top of the Burro Canyon formation (at an grade of at least 6,200 feet above mean sea level); Alternative B, complete backfilling of the Centennial Pit; and Alternative C, the no action alternative.

FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT

Based upon a review of the EA and the supporting documents, I have determined that the project is not a major federal action and will not significantly affect the quality of the human

environment, individually or cumulatively with other actions in the general area. No environmental effects meet the definition of significance in context or intensity as defined in 40 CFR 1508.27 and do not exceed those effects described in the Moab Resource Management Plan, Final Environmental Impact Statement (RMP FEIS) and the Lisbon Valley Copper Project Final Environmental Impact Statement, 1997 (LVMC FEIS). Therefore, another environmental impact statement is not needed.

This finding is based on the context and intensity of the project as described:

Context: The Lisbon Valley Mine Plan Modification for backfilling the Centennial Pit is a site-specific action directly involving approximately 176 acres of previously disturbed BLM administered land that by itself does not have international, national, regional, or state-wide importance. The project is located in a semi-remote area of San Juan, County. The existing copper mine is operating under a current mining plan of operations which was authorized in 1997. The FEIS for the copper mine analyzed the surface disturbance of 1,104 acres. The project is within the proposed surface disturbance of the current mine plan.

Intensity: The following discussion is organized around the Ten Significance Criteria described in 40 CFR 1508.27 and incorporated into resources and issues considered (includes supplemental authorities Appendix 1 H-1790-1) and supplemental Instruction Memorandum, Acts, regulations and Executive Orders. The following have been considered in evaluating intensity for this proposal:

1. Impacts may be both beneficial and adverse.

The environmental impacts are disclosed in the EA. Mitigating measures to reduce impacts to groundwater resources were incorporated in the design of the action alternative. None of the environmental effects discussed in detail in the EA and associated appendices are considered significant, nor do the effects exceed those described in the Moab Resource Management Plan FEIS and the Lisbon Copper Project FEIS. Monitoring wells will be installed and monitoring incorporated in the groundwater monitoring program. Groundwater monitoring will be continued after closure for 5 years.

2. The degree to which the selected alternative will affect public health or safety.

The proposed action is designed to minimize the effects on public health and safety, by reducing the depth of the pit, negating the possibility of a pit lake, and reducing the surface disturbance from waste dumps. No other effects on public health and safety were identified during scoping nor were the comments submitted with relevance for the EA.

3. Unique characteristics of the geographic area such as proximity to historic or cultural resources, park lands, prime farm lands, wetlands, wilderness, wild and scenic rivers, or ecologically critical areas.

There will be no new surface disturbance. The following Critical Elements of the Human Environment will not be affected because they are not present in the project area: Areas of

Critical Environmental Concern (ACEC), Prime or Unique Farmlands, Wetlands or Riparian Zones, Wild or Scenic Rivers, and Designated Wilderness or Wilderness Study Areas (WSA), or cultural resource component of the Human Environment and Resource Issues.

4. The degree to which the effects on the quality of the human environment are likely to be highly controversial.

Public input regarding the Proposed Action was solicited through a scoping and public review process through a press release and was published as a legal notice in the San Juan Record that appeared in the San Juan Record on April 15, 2014. The scoping period began on April 9, 2014 and ended on May 12, 2014.

The 30 day public comment period was from July 31, 2015 to August 30, 2015. The BLM received five comment emails. Four of the respondents were in favor of complete backfill of the Centennial Pit. One commenter questioned the validity of the tests and the competency of the consultants conducting the tests. And another commented on photographic content of the EA and format and pointed out an error message that appeared in the EA. The error message was fixed in the EA. None of the other comments received required changes to the EA.

Past experience with mining-related projects has shown that certain groups and members of the public are generally opposed to the visual effects of mining and that these projects can be contentious. Therefore, based on the comments received from the public and the analyses in the EA, we have determined that the effects of the Proposed Action on the quality of the human environment are not considered "highly controversial" because there is not a substantial dispute as to its size, nature, or effect.

5. The degree to which the possible effects on the human environment are highly uncertain or involve unique or unknown risks.

The Proposed Action is not unique or unusual. Copper mining has a long history in the Lisbon Valley area. The Lisbon Valley Mining Company has operated the mine since 2004 and its effects were analyzed in a final environmental impact statement in 1997 and the effects of the mining plan modifications are analyzed in this EA. There are no predicted effects on the human environment that are considered to be highly uncertain or involve unique or unknown risks.

6. The degree to which the action may establish a precedent for future actions with significant effects or represents a decision in principle about a future consideration.

The Proposed Action neither establishes a precedent for future BLM actions with significant effects nor represents a decision in principle about a future consideration.

7. Whether the action is related to other actions with individually insignificant but cumulatively significant impacts - which include connected actions regardless of land ownership.

No individually or cumulatively significant impacts were identified for the Proposed Action. A complete disclosure of the effects of the project is contained in Chapter 4 of the EA. The minor

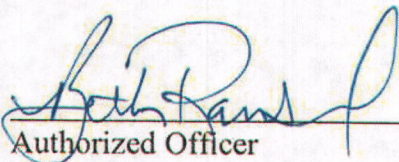
adverse and beneficial impacts identified for the Proposed Action, in conjunction with any impacts of other past, present, or reasonably foreseeable future actions will have negligible cumulative impacts on the human environment resources. There is no new surface disturbance therefore, the project will not adversely affect districts, sites, highways, structures, or other objects listed in or eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places, nor will it cause loss or destruction of significant scientific, cultural, or historical resources.

9. The degree to which the action may adversely affect an endangered or threatened species or its habitat that has been determined to be critical under the Endangered Species Act of 1973, or the degree to which the action may adversely affect: 1) a proposed to be listed endangered or threatened species or its habitat, or 2) a species on BLM's sensitive species list.

No Threatened, endangered, or candidate animal species are known to occur in the area of the Lisbon Valley Copper Mine. There is no potential for Mexican Spotted Owls to nest in the area. The determination was made that the Lisbon Valléy Copper Mine is an active operation and that no new impacts to Utah BLM Sensitive Species (bald eagle, peregrine falcon, Ferruginous hawk, Swainson's hawk, burrowing owl) are expected to occur. The FEIS fully analyzed the effects on these species and no new information has been identified for the area. There is no Gunnison sage-grouse occupancy in this portion of the field office area and this project will not impact Gunnison prairie dog, as activities are not located in active colonies.

10. Whether the action threatens a violation of a federal, state, local, or tribal law, regulation or policy imposed for the protection of the environment, where nonfederal requirements are consistent with federal requirements.

The project does not violate any known federal, state, local, or tribal law or requirement imposed for the protection of the environment. Federal, state, local, and tribal interests were given the opportunity to participate in the environmental analysis process. Although several comments were received, none of the respondents identified a violation of applicable environmental laws, regulations, or other requirements. In addition, the project is consistent with applicable land management plans, policies, and programs.


Authorized Officer

10/16/15
Date